Monsieur Dupont
Nihilist Communism: Cruelty or the Inclusion of the Distributive Sphere
2003

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Contents

a tendency or movement, not at all inevitable and containing its truth, now and in the past, wrapped up inside its events like a parcel left on a shelf of the unconscious to be interpreted and realised as revolution.

The revolution as an event is dependent on many factors, the first in importance of these is the control of production by the working class, this control does not exist in the present except as an ideological sense of reified labour, that is, as a capitalist reflection upon the role of labour and the threat of the proletariat. All formulations of communism that refer to the present day are reflections that have passed through many ideological filters of present, general, social conditions and are therefore reflections only of those general social conditions, they must always reestablish what determines them from the base. Communism really is a utopia, a utopia dependent on the transformation of the organisation of basic human activity. Communism is a utopia set in the future, after capitalism, but we are not moving towards it, we are revolving in cycles of events set by the conditions of those few possible events. Today we are still living at about 1860. For a new event to establish itself, there must be new conditions, or at least the failure and end of present conditions, a new ground. There is no movement towards this new event because, strangely, the event of revolution is the only undetermined event, it must ground itself, it must break away from current determinations and this is impossible to 'understand' or theorise, other than to say that the more instability and conflict there is within the current system of causes and effects the more likely is the chance for a completely different mode of human being to break through and establish itself. We are at the end of our understanding, we are not therefore optimistic, we see that objective events are beyond our, and any group or individual's, capacity to influence them.

Monsieur Dupont

constituted in the actual process of capitalism destruction, one is not born in the other's death even if that death is a prerequisite. We should not hope to hand over all responsibility for the institution of communism to the workers, who as a social category will be destroyed along with capital in the collapse, we should not hope for it in singular future events nor should we get round the a-political nature of crisis by theoretically expanding the concept of the working class to include everyone so as to allow for some kind of participatory people's revolution against capital. There will come a point in the struggle of the proletariat against capital where all sane people will wish for a return to capitalism as it was and whatever lies in the future will look very doubtful, such will be the conditions of our world's unpleasantness.

Are all piecemeal struggles entwined together in their roots, roots which taken together sustain a great tree of Revolution? Perhaps, but only in a negative sense, in that capital reproduces its conditions and the struggles against those conditions all over the world, there is no necessary communist element in specific proletarian struggles, even if there is a contingent one: the proletariat are the structural factor within generalised production that has a potential chance of overthrowing production, so every instance of industrial conflict points faintly to the possibility: if this instance should coincide with and then deliberately connect to many other similar conflicts then such an event could become a pre-revolutionary situation, that is, a crisis of capital. The role of the pro-revolutionary communist, so some say, is to 'understand' the supposed inter-connections of proletarian struggle and thereby bring them to the surface and make them explicit. This understanding, they argue, is possible because the pro-revolutionary communist lives the unfragmented life, the communist embodies a central task of 'the living historical movement' and thus has the necessary categories of understanding in place so as to make the strategic manoeuvre of 'understanding', as intervention. We do not think this real movement exists, except in a negative form, and we do not see any reason for not thinking that communism really is something that appears at the end of capitalism and is dependent on a social base of workers control of production; we see communism as something that exists after the revolution, the revolution is an event, something that happens concretely at a certain moment in time, it is not

Feint

State capitalism doesn't do splendor like the old monarchs did, even though it has the means to do it better. Power has found that it cannot safely parade its power without giving natural enemies a target to aim at, so it secures itself by staging shows where factions of the ruling class compete to expose their rivals weaknesses — the least wicked, corrupt inept, foolish is the winner. Nevertheless a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid, it must show some light through its curtains. And whilst critical attention may be directed away sufficiently for that to become the normal run of things, pet journalists and heated debates about renewable energy, all that politics circus, there are occasions when a searching look will be turned back upon itself, something of the something going on shines through. Enough of a something to crack the city walls.

Capitalism as a totality only appears out of the corner of the mouth, over the shoulder, a whisper in a crowded room. If you look capitalism straight in the face you will see nothing but an issue, a spectacle, a sideshow, an ideology, what you get is politics. What is made for the eye is not there. Where you look, power isn't. What you debate does not touch the matter.

What we live in, what we live through, is not a society organised on the basis of principles, nor on beliefs or opinions. Capitalism, like all forms of social dominion, boils down to position, interest, ownership and those sustained by force. You can't debate with capitalism, nor dispute with it, nor take it through the courts. All engagement at the level of political agenda, social aspiration and cultural value no matter what the content, *no matter what the content*, takes place within the world as it is, the world organised by capital. At the level of values, ideas and beliefs, there is nothing outside of capitalism.

Capitalism is defined in its perfection of domination by a characteristic of disguising itself, making its workings invisible but showing something else. We look at the screen not the projector. What happens, what interests us, what is put on for us, is fatally unimportant.

Capitalism is a general rule or law for social relations that determines and is made up of many small and boring gestures, the banality of which we could not look at even if we thought it vital, but which nonetheless are

organised around the centralising configuration of power, the immense gravity of ownership.

The truth of our moment is like staying awake in the garden of Gethsemene: sleep and politics are more desirable, more inevitable. And even in the pure will of revolt, or especially there, the gaze that would hunt out the ugly truth to slay it in righteous anger, chooses, in the end, to settle for surface disturbances. And all that time, like the bureaucrats of Dennis Potter, the figureheads sing, *Look not at us but at the events unfolding, we are only the administrators of what is inevitable.* The world is made to appear as a machine running itself and its owners nothing but its minders.

In crisis *power* looms over its enemies. In crisis everyone is an enemy. Crisis is the one time power can show itself imposing itself, without fear of usurpation. But even here, there is a current trend to manufacture crisis as a representation, we are passing into a time when crises exist only at the level of the screen. You could say capitalism is now concerned primarily with the orchestration of crisis and its theatrical overcoming. The UN have recently linked the 'most powerful supercomputers in the world' to generate predictions of global weather collapse, sea inundations, life amongst twisters, and melting polar icecaps: set eighty years in the future, this virtual crisis forms the ground conditions for capital investment in technologies of anti-crisis. Communications technologies are being superseded by anti-crisis industries as capital's preferred futurological modality. In crisis, power manifests itself up close, not as itself, not naked, but in the manner of the Wizard of Oz, a roaring face. Noise is the proper medium of contemporary power, it occupies all wavelengths and prevents other sounds, you can feel it pinning you against the wall, but it is careful never to form any discernible words.

Crisis and noise. All crises of the economy are manifested at last in terms of crowds and the control of crowds. A couple of years back, protesting students were forced out of their occupation of a Canadian university by the authorities' deployment of a *Backstreet Boys* album which was played at them repeatedly and without break for days on end (why not a *Backstreet Boys* single, or one, unending, note? Perhaps this marks the qualitative difference between democratic and totalitarian

unfragmented life, that in the posing of themselves as an opposition to capital they incarnate its overcoming. Of our contemporaries, these two examples demonstrate the tendency, *The Bad Days Will End* say this, "Communism is not a 'program' nor a goal of the distant future; it is the living historical movement of resistance and revolution by workers and the oppressed ourselves against capitalism and exploitation in all its forms", and *Aufheben* go further,

> *"The real movement must always be open, self-critical, prepared to identify limits to its present practice and to overcome them.* Here it is understood that communism 'is not an ideal to which reality must accommodate itself. Our task is to understand, and to be consciously part of something which already truly exists — *the real movement that seeks to abolish the existing conditions."*

Is there a real, unconscious, subterranean movement towards communism? And is the 'task' of revolutionaries to 'understand' this movement by bringing it into the open, and thus redeeming themselves with a godly importance? Is there "a real movement" against capitalism, a movement of social events which incorporates communism into itself as much at the beginning as at the end? Is there a unity of ends and means, where that which opposes capitalism also somehow incarnates a moving on from present conditions? Or isn't this an idealisation of opposition, looking for something positive in what could only be anti? Perhaps it is a desire to identify counter-examples to the way things are, to have alternatives and escape routes *right now.* It seems there is a confusion in the communist milieu over the differing value of political aspiration and conflict that is inherent to the economic structure. Only those who name themselves 'aufheben' could discern in historical ruptures a continued movement of progress towards communism, each moment adding its brick to the anti-capitalist citadel.

Capitalism, if it is to collapse, will enter its final crisis being driven to its extinction by the proletariat, but in this destruction we should not look for too many positive forms or signs of future freedom; the end of capitalism as a base for social possibility is a precondition of communism but the death of capital will not be pretty. And nor will communism be

enclosed and even useful to the funding bids of social management agencies then the organisation of alternatives to capital calamitously misplace all conceptions of generality. It is one thing to set your group up as a negatively defined element within the field of social forces, and even this has potential for error and self-misunderstanding, but to seek to organise something that embodies a going beyond capitalism, a making of the future in the present, a guide to how things might be, is fated to end as just one of the multitudinous forms of social being compatible with the capitalist base.

Since the early Nineteenth Century there have been attempts at village communities of decided ideology, communes and the like. They have all failed, either because they betrayed their expressed values for the price of expediency or, more importantly, they failed to break out of their restricted situation and became resigned to a peripheral status as an *alternative*. A terrible *alternative* idea of stasis was introduced: that the radical minority could gain for itself what it wanted but only for a short period and over a small area. The small unit, which sustained itself in opposition to the generality, and whose end became only the continued realisation of itself in its locational particularity, also realised elements within its bounds that were entirely determined by the generality, but which had gone unrecognised — beginning with the very idea of separateness, of the niche and specialisation. Communes and elective communities establish themselves as a refined type of capitalist living even as they pose as an opposition and alternative to more conventional capitalist livings. The end for the commune, like that of the ideological party is the pursuit of itself; its drive, like the drive of the millenarian sect, is the unhappy sense of never quite completing the circle; the endless reforms and modifications; the self-promotion and recruiting; the struggle for society-tight seals and temporal enclosure like re-enactment 'experiments' of the past staged regularly at stately homes, "television sire? Prithy, what is that? And pray why doth thou go about in such strange garb?" Individual assertions of transcendence do not escape mass-conformist individualism but complete its criteria by overly complicated means. The *conformity by rebellion* pattern is not confined to the lifestylist anarchist milieu, there is an uncritical expectation amongst pro-revolutionary communists that they might live the

torture methods?). The inferno of Waco was preceded by 'psy-war' techniques in the form of Wall Of Jericho style directional noise artillery, the groundwork for which was laid during the US blast, bang, blare, siege of Noriega. We recall stun grenades in the Iranian embassy. New wave, anti-crisis, crowd control strategies advocate the necessity of targeting social dissonance with immediate and maximum use of unbloody force, this accepting the given that 'a videotape' of what happens will surface eventually, (stun technologies, microwave pulse weapons — everything is permitted so long as it doesn't make blood and bone appear, a technological version of, 'don't touch his face').

Noise is also circumstantial. The thud of DU tipped entertainment pierces privacy. Objective background hubbub, motor traffic. Whirr. Throb. No peace from purchased communications. Bleep. Noises forming alliances; informal blocks of techniques and applications of sound acting as deterrent to drift; bodies channelled, persuaded, funnelled into designated areas. Behind the soundstage readies of the commodity organise popular distraction. A woman has to be restrained by court order from playing Whitney Houston's "I will always love you" all day and all night, the neighbours become crazed precisely because there is no agenda other than the routinisation of this figure of unbearable proximity: walls, ears, noise technique. The generators in the dark of the funfair. An orchestrated Babel of diverting news issues. Chime. Everybody addresses the appearance of crisis, all anybody is concerned about is its alleviation. Throw a cloth over it. CRASH. 'Over there, animal epidemic! Sigh, nothing can be done.' Plastic tape across the roads. Bing bong broadcast.

Thrust

But this is the world. We observe the attacks made upon our bodies, and describe the shadows that attend disruptive phenomena but there is no critique as such to be made, no protest could be adequate to the continued diminution of personal life in the face of the perpetual throbbing of commodity spread. Power will do what it will, there is little (if we are consistent in our analysis) that we can do to oppose it. Nothing,

that is, unless we are prepared to accept the legitimacy of medium term political objectives and dedicate ourselves to treating symptoms, and it is sure that we are not prepared to accept that. Power will do what it will, and it *will* extend itself to the maximum of its capacity, the pursuit of power is its own realisation, the end of capitalism is the domination of the world by capitalism. This does not surprise us, it is what we expect, and we understand that every expansion of its dominion will be attended by some form of political protest as interest niches and cliques of experts get jostled about and rearranged.

> *No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises only when material conditions for its solution already exist or, at least, are in the process of formation.*
>
> Preface to A Critique of Political Economy

That is what we expect. The above is a profoundly pessimistic text, parts of Marx's writing have come to read like a prophecy for capitalism stretching out forever; in truth, the 'room' for the development of capitalism's productive forces is infinite, the gestation and birth goes on forever and, simultaneously, even the total collapse of the 'biosphere' (something that in certain discourses appears to be bigger than capitalism's capacity to handle it) is contained and forms a uterine wall to which new capitalising initiatives might attach themselves.

Our concepts have enabled us to grasp that the content of much of the protest directed against capitalist encroachment is concerned with interest group re-establishment within updated configurations of power. Even anti-capitalism is contained within a lopsided dialectic where conflict is played out by conditions set by an already given synthesis. Some play the politics game, even when they say they reject it. When politics is routinised on coordinates set by the economy, when it is made to appear by forces that do not appear within it, then politics becomes a

their own existence; capitalism is easily capable of supplying dissonant forms, the proof for which is to be found in the existence of radical groups, all of which are contained within the political-cultural field and are neutralised along the lines of politics and culture. Better to not engage at all, do nothing, make no comment.

Cultural preference, especially the pursuit of the authentic, is not an appropriate form of communist struggle. The only important cultural forms for communists are those that may be reused to articulate and illuminate experience of negation and engagement within the economy. Walter Benjamin, for example, observed that the machinery of the fairground accelerates, through shocks and jolts to the senses, the process by which workers are habituated to the horrors of mechanised work; at no point did he argue for the organisation of radical or alternative fairground forms to oppose desensitisation, indeed all such theatres of cruelty, and confrontational circuses, despite their radical ideology, only thrust the capitalist form further into people's heads. Benjamin's conclusion was simply that as this unavoidable disciplining could not be effectively opposed on its own terms, it was therefore to be hoped that the always decreasing distance between workers and industrial machinery would somehow facilitate the workers' expropriation of the machines.

Stop thinking Expressivity, start thinking Transcendence

> *It also goes without saying that we unconditionally support all forms of liberated mores, everything that the bourgeoisie or bureaucratic scum call debauchery. It is obviously out of the question that we should pave the way for the revolution of everyday life with asceticism.*
>
> SI Questionnaire

The non-fragmented life. If ideas of subjective resistance to capital have eventually become *infantalised* under pressure of terrible and continued defeat, a petulant 'shan't' to authority's sternly ordered 'shall', easily

photocopier in radicality of form. Thus the efforts of RTS to parody *The London Evening Standard* and *Monopoly* seem rather tame and formally conservative.

Imagination is taking power used to be a slogan of the libertarian left as it role-played a series of surface oppositions that portrayed the establishment as inhibitive and itself as carnival harlequin; now imagination is in power, it has been recruited through a maximisation of the role of the culture industry through lottery funding, 24 hour broadcast media, the internet, and the manufacture of celebrity as a product but nothing could be duller than our bungey-jump society created out of the unholy union of capital and radical imagination. The preference for extreme, *to the max* entertainment has something Roman about it but it remains spectacular, that is beyond critique or engagement.

The answer of revolutionaries to the perceived threat of cultural recuperation is to push *it* still further, finding aesthetic beauty in the ugly and discordant 'real' of everyday life, delinquency is celebrated as a form of total resistance (rather than the state supervised macho social incontinence that it really is). In Kings Lynn, Britain, Spring 2001, a pizza delivery driver was surrounded by a gang that demanded the contents of his van and then beat him up. Some pro-revolutionaries would probably celebrate the youths for attacking a representative of domination and the Americanised food industry. Some would say, of course, that the gang should have drawn the line at physically attacking the driver, but, even so, such events are often routinely portrayed by pro-revolutionaries as signs of *movement*, of *escalation*, of an emergent generalised radical consciousness, the gang may even be celebrated for enacting the revolutionary necessity of the redistribution of food (we have seen how attacking McDonalds or parked cars has been advocated as *direct action*, but, in fact, these acts are cultural and based upon certain aesthetics of preference). The pursuit of radicality or social and political extremism within a society grounded in extreme maximisation of exploitation is an impossible and unsustainable strategy, all cultural extremism feeds into the amphitheatre; extreme gestures become, literally, a kind of trailblazing of cultural forms. The cultural elitism inherent to anti-capitalist forms, which claim to pose more *real* forms (music, language, literature etc), to the mystifications of the establishment, disprove themselves by

secondary issue which can never touch the thing itself. Reality, state power, capitalist infrastructure is not transparently coherent, there are flaws made up of competing factions — but, leapfrog each other as they may, none of these interest groups can get beyond the general terms for social relations set by capital. New packs of cards but always the same rules of play.

None of that is difficult, it is to be expected. We are also perfectly capable of theorising the continued breaking off of revolutionary groups into alliances with reformist initiatives; we all have our personal lines in the sand, we are all passionate beings, we are all likely to be goaded into futile action every once in a while by some perceived urgency. With every bit of this we are at ease, it is within the bounds of our comprehension and requires only a steadying influence. But that is not all. What has surprised us, and what we always run into as a concomitant to capitalism's appearance in society as distractive and, ultimately, nullifying noise is, the failing silent of pro-revolutionaries when faced with the particularly vibrant and rebellious manifestations of reformism. In a reversal of the negotiative conventions of diplomacy, pro-revolutionary theory loses its critique precisely at the point the state becomes most conciliatory, thereby losing everything in the rush to secure real gains. It is most prone to capitulation when the state is most willing to negotiate. Pro-revolutionaries are *most* gullible when the state is *most* plausible, they fumble their critique at the moment it ought to be pushed to its fullest limit. It is not coincidence that these periodic re-territorialisations of apparently revolutionary positions by the state, this calling in of dogs allowed to roam wild, under the pretence of exigent political reform, occur in moments most likely to go objectively into a revolutionary situation. Personalist, or identity, politics is one such roaming dog. It strutted like a sheep killer but really it was on a long lead.

Parry

We will participate in the revolution no more than any other individual worker, we see no role for anyone in the first stages of social revolution that is more than participating as an individual in the seizure

of the means of production. However, because we are cursed with consciousness of our conditions, we have allocated to ourselves another job, the description of our experiences.

We will not explain the world. We refuse to acquire an empire of political expertise, the partiality of which lies precisely in inverted relation to the claims of such explanations to totality. The ultra-left is still dominated by theoretical explanation, which forms the sandy base for predictions of victory and the end of capital. We can see no purpose in detailed critical explanation's of capitalism's processes: critique of power becomes veneration of power, for example, the works of Marx became a ground for the creation of an instituted exotic rival to ordinary exploitation.

To get away from explanation we opt for description. We describe our experiences of capitalism because our findings may be tactically applicable, our experiences also serve as justification for our existence but we do not seek to explain capital in total, either philosophically or economically, this is beyond our capability and, we believe, an unachievable/unjustifiable project for anyone (quite simply we do not think it necessary to grasp capitalism in consciousness to overthrow it). The job we have given ourselves is the investigation of side-of-the-mouth capitalist forms as they appear variously disguised as radical alternatives to capital. Houdini made it his life's work to expose spiritualists and mediums using his knowledge of conjuring, he pursued magic by critique. In the same way, we understand that in American football there is a role for an individual who's only purpose is to physically impede members of the opposing team. Like Houdini, we intend to use our critical abilities to expose the tabletappers and spoonbenders of the revolutionary milieu, those who, in our opinion, would lead the revolution by complicated route back to the basic capitalist social relation. Our purpose is not mere denunciation, call us Saint Just if you like, but the activation of a corrective agent designed to operate against dangerously false positions (those that are not merely ideologically wrong but are out and out counterrevolutionary) and to more realistically describe what is strategically appropriate and possible for small pro-revolutionary groups to achieve. For example, many such groups have taken it upon themselves to engage in reformist 'community' campaigns, we see nothing wrong in this but

whilst momentous events were unfolding, that they should 'sit around theorising', when they ought to be 'out there showing solidarity and getting our ideas across', But what can ten or twelve déclassé individuals 'do'? Make situations of course. It is at the juncture where the individual or small group seeks to make itself significant to the world that leftist ideology becomes less concerned with inconceivable masses and more focused on conceptions of the self. From *S. o. B.'s* initial transformation of the formula for social division from owner/worker to ordergiver/ordertaker, a sudden rush of new theories of polarity went in and out of leftbank fashion: authentic/inauthentic, tuned in/straight, spectator/actant. Existentialism, Marcuse and the mythic heroes of popular culture (Dean, Presley, Brando, and later Guevara) also contributed to the legitimisation of pursuing the forms of ideological oppositions. In the end it became, and it is this mockery that present day advertisers use as a jemmy, the opposition of boring normality against the coolly different — revolutionaries were the cool sect.

The mainstream media now grounds its operations in the production of maximised untypicality; on any single evening it is possible to find on TV celebratory reference to cannabis, sexual fetishism, *independent* pop music, spiced and groovy foods, stylised homes and gardens. It is assumed that normality is now individualised, there is a background of millions of people going off backpacking to faraway places, people are young, they are funky, they want more than their parents had, more in the sense of *different*. Very amusing and slightly embarrassing but nonetheless not at all revolutionary. And so the pro-revolutionary, operating with the Sixties legacy of *IT, Oz, The SI* and within the cultural/ideological sphere, must push it further: pirate radio, webcasts, clubnights (there are more leaflets given out at *Reclaim The Streets* events for raves than for political positions); the *real thing*, that is, the subjective conditioning and autonomous production of non-conformity must be even more cutting edge, more knowing and more stylistically radical than the latest Ball and Theakston product. Unfortunately, 'style', the production of stylisation, is dependent on who has the best video editing technology; so the BBC, the not so stuffy any more BBC (the BBC of *The Love Parade* Great Britain) can now produce images, sequences, cultural products that outstrip the efforts of any pro-revolutionary and his

line life as revolutionary concepts, perspectives and tactics, the trick was not to be 'separate', to be within the proletariat and to *appreciate* it by interpreting what seemed to be the unsophisticated pursuit of self-interest as strategic positioning within an objective class struggle. If mass organisations must always produce a settling tendency towards bureaucracy and political reaction then the small revolutionary group resembled in group structure and in the ideology of practical effectiveness, the artistic avant garde school. The Surrealist and Dadaist groups became the model. Small numbers of people, precisely because of their purity, could at certain moments achieve spectacular results — if they judged their interventions correctly.

How many of you are there?

> *A few more, than the original guerrilla nucleus in the Sierra Madre, but with fewer weapons. A few less than the delegates in London in 1864 who founded the International Workingmen's Association, but with a more coherent program. As unyielding as the Greeks at Thermopylae ("Passerby, go tell them at Lacedaemon . . . "), but with a brighter future.*
>
> SI Questionnaire

Revolutionary groups, in the absence of the realisation of the unity of theory and practice, sought to establish the reality of truth in two places at once: in their own heads and in the objectively constituted but autonomous working class engagement with the economy. But the contemplative role of the revolutionary cell soon became restrictive, and so to compensate for this, or at least to address this discomfort, the groups sought out means, events, modes, ideologies, whereby they could justify their appearance on the stage as actors. It is important that the move towards action and its justification was begun in response to initial passivity, that is, direct political engagement was begun from a predication of subjective, ideological factors; for the revolutionary groups becoming fidgety it soon became morally insupportable that they should 'sit by'

no amount of such 'improvements' will lead to a revolutionary situation or even revolutionary consciousness; in this case we would see our job as to demonstrate that the aggregation of reforms gained through popular pressure will not necessarily, or even at all, lead to revolution, quite the opposite in fact. Our first case history concerns what we call personalist politics which is otherwise generally known as identity politics.

In Out Out Out circles there are no longer any radical points to be won for declaring that *the personal is political*, in part this is because the campaigns for personal rights are no longer conducted in political terms (tribunals have replaced collective bargaining). It is also because as a motto, as a refrain, the personal is political operates generally within grassroots social campaign groups as the entirety of their manifesto and has therefore become invisible — to question 'equal opportunities', for example, is simple bigotry to leftist social managers who have spent the last twenty years, since the light went out of their eyes, campaigning for it. Within the radical/progressive tendency the rationale and aspiration of personalist politics is either implicitly acknowledged as formative or, at the very least not considered to be an appropriate issue for critique. *The personal is political* became a motif of social antagonism after '68, new, unused subjective modalities were set up in opposition to what had become traditional forms of represented individuality. Driven by popular culture and the freeing up of post war restraint on personal expression (*butterfly upon a wheel*) campaigning subjectivities asserted themselves within institutional settings, demanding recognition and rights beyond those assigned them by the traditional establishment and the official workers movement (an 'Asian community leader' stated after the north of England riots of June 2001 that, "we are not asking for more than the whites but we are certainly not going to settle for less"). Rebellions were conducted with explicit reference to individual experience of everyday life and its deprivations as archetypical prejudice. Personalism became a critique of existing conditions, some even thought it could be politicised and used as a basis for attacking capital itself.

So it was left to the last two scorpions under one wet stone to organise the sharing out of the political forms of personalism. One took to itself the inscribed circle of the *inescapable condition*. And the other dressed in the cap and bells of *expressivity*.

The inescapable condition

Civil rights campaigns were conducted from an understanding that whoever you were as a human being living in this society you had the constitutional right to be recognised legally as an equal to all other citizens. But positions in advance of legalistic equality were already tumbling over each other to get to the front of these marches; the critique of the concept of rights has been apparently transcended in any number of rebellious partial subject positions and legitimised via left ideology, its various forms have ranged from liberationist, anti-imperialism and racial/sexual separatist struggles to anti-capitalism as it now appears, but, in all cases, it boils down to a consciousness: *we ARE different and we can't be included in YOUR state.* Both tyranny and the resistance to it are, from the post civil rights perspective, natural conditions — the black struggles against white oppression, women against patriarchy. The consciousness that perceives itself as existing through an inescapable condition set by a residual, unsocial (and probably 'genetic/biological) category has gone largely unchallenged by the left even though such categories run counter to typical progressivist concepts of universalism. The 'liberation' projects of homosexuals, women and blacks have had a profound influence on all socialist groupings and it is rare not to read in a group's *aims and principles* the assertion that as well as being for *socialism* the group is also 'against sexism and racism (and any other form of oppression and exploitation)'. Why is it that equal opportunity sentiments have been welded onto revolutionary aims as conditions when they are theoretically anterior to a revolutionary position?

Certainly, there is the Nietzschean will to recruit within special interest campaigns and thereby 'have a presence' in the debates of these campaigns but there is also a vulnerability, an untheorised anxiety over possible perceived omissions concerning the special cases of sexuality, race and gender which might leave them open to accusations of prejudice. But by what means would an avowedly revolutionary group (and here we shall leave out all the left statists as not worthy of consideration) be against prejudice? The great ecumenical vision of the Seventies was for some kind of alliance of all liberation tendencies in the absence of a proletarian revolutionary subject but, in reality, these competing and

of stillness and perhaps a total non-appearance of social dissonance so we place ourselves in the space, we will make ourselves and our gesture the object at issue, we will do something and we shall be registered.

Aesthetic considerations have become a fundamental of revolutionary politics since 1950 and have found no adequate critique since, in the last three years in London there has been a concerted attempt to revive *les ballet des rues* in *Carnival Against Capitalism, Guerrilla Gardening* and *Mayday Monopoly*. These interventions have been staged as attempts at establishing a popular cultural form that is simultaneously a revolutionary critique of capitalism. The shift of 'revolutionary action' into a cultural mode is resultant of four factors: (1) the myth of 1968 being the most important; (2) the formal dominance of pop culture in society coupled with an idea that it has somehow been betrayed and made to speak against its true nature; (3) the passing of the ownership of revolutionary theory to a specific class of bohemians who have been fostered at several interchanges of the economy, particularly at the peripheries of academia, the media, the welfare state, mental hospitals, the art world; (4) the reversed idea within revolutionary milieus that personal and social extremism always constitutes a threat to society and therefore should be recognised, encouraged and even enacted (a reversed idea because it has been swallowed whole, it being the basic normal/abnormal mystification distributed by the media which portrays the world as being normally at balance but beset occasionally by the symptoms of contingent and isolated problems, the media says cannabis is bad, but is this cause enough for the revolutionaries to say it is good?).

The character of revolutionary organisation has largely transformed since 1950 (in response to Leninism), the ideal of the bureaucratic party leading the masses has been eroded by the millions who had a tendency to vote with their feet for anything stupid the hierarchy told them to vote for; membership of political parties became something like supporting a football team, you did it for no reason and without thought. *Socialisme ou Barbarie* was the first example of the new model, relatively small, ideologically pure groups finding their values realised in objective events and then looking to intervene by means of the transmission of consciousness to the masses, who were prepared, and ready to receive it, by events. The trick was to articulate ordinary experience of production

speeding up. Our grandfather was a handyman, he fixed things because everything, from toys to cars, in the forties and fifties was fixable with a spanner, now there is only Superglue; nothing can be mended any more only returned via statutory rights; rag and bone men, the last of the paid finishers, disappeared in the Seventies but many everyday economies in Africa are based upon the reuse of tin cans (more systematically, but going unrecognised, the first purchasers of any new fangled invention (Windows 95 etc.) are its low cost testers and finishers, it is up to them to discover the glitches and flaws, to make the complaints).

Pro-revolutionaries might find this a dull and unimportant lesson but 'anti-capitalism' has predicated itself on the assumption of radical expressivity, the pivotal moment of any Reclaim The Streets event is the arrival of a *smuggled in* soundsystem. Oscar Wilde never made a claim for the revolutionary potential of poetry, he understood that revolution belonged to the working class, anti-capitalists have forgotten this, for them cultural manifestations in the streets are manifestations of resistance to capitalism. But radical expressivity is only a final layer of varnish on a product that has had a long trip down a conveyor belt, why should this last process of many be valued so highly? To advocate an anti-capitalist culture in the belief that it can be 'spread' and will eventually overthrow capital is a confusion of cultural content for productive form; anti-capitalism is a fragment of pop culture and functions as such, it cannot escape its confines, even down to the repetitious and exclusive nature of its events.

Next section but keep thinking *Expressivity*

The only time a weasel makes a sound is when it's dying. All it's life in silence and suddenly its got a lot to say for itself, too much, and then it's cut short. Expressivity is the whine of defeat, it is the sound of pressure, of the pips squeaking.

In the end we return to the last avant gardes, those who would make themselves real, through them we will finally define the last and most radical figure of expressivist personal politics. The avant garde set-up, the avant garde set-up that found politics (and by 1960 there was no other avant garde) is this: *there is an impossible situation, no exit, a sense*

often mutually hostile formations could only be united, that is contained, within the democratic, constitutional state which produced the conditions for their formation. State recognition and funding, the apparatus of internal promotion within the extended state apparatus and the systematic retardation of the claims of rivals are the only notable political operational modes of the liberation movements (there is no 'liberation' movement as such, only mutually exclusive organisations claiming to be the true voice of that movement, The Nation of Islam is the voice of black men/people/America). The militancy of individuals within the liberation movements made it possible for a small number of leaders to get paid to be gay, female, black. Liberation politics did not, in reality, transcend either the civil rights movement or any pre-defined social category's relations with the state; liberation politics marked the appropriation of a number of democratic fragments by a leadership who used the momentum built up by these fragments (and their failure) as a rationale for their leadership, which they secured by means of advocating more extreme tactics (extremism in tactics did not express a revolutionary intent but a measure of their individual ambition.) The 'racial' meltdown in Britain's northern cities during June 2001 has exposed the leadership structure, and organisational manipulation of racial 'identities' in place, the apparent crisis has led to these community organisations accusing each other in terms of opportunism, personal ambition, intolerance, self-segregation etc (e.g. Channel 4 Television News 12/7/01). When the lie of state promoted ethnic identity breaks down, the truth of individualist capital accumulation is revealed.

Liberation politics was not recuperated by the state in the end but was initiated by it at the beginning, its origins lay in the administration's addressing of *social problem* issues according to sociological categories; the subsequent appropriation of research funding by *community* leaders was later formalised as community relations and an ad hoc local/informal (that is unaccountable) state apparatus was formed joining itself to the official state by means of establishing recognisable locales that could be funded and could reciprocate by supplying both social data by which future funding could be judged and accounts to say how money had been spent. Deciding on issues of prejudice (which means no more than deciding the allocation of funds to social management) has since

remained under the control of the state's legal and community apparatus, which provides a stage for elite community representatives arguing their constituency's case from their structurally guaranteed positions; in the meantime the popular *political* manifestations that established the need for such recognised positions have fallen away (to return as mere a-political riots that have to be interpreted by leaders). The social sciences have made a further contribution to the issue of the *inescapable condition* by theorising the working class as just one more constituency that needs to be heard, a cultural entity disconnected from the mainstream. The *inescapable condition* is a statist ideology, that is, it depends upon legal recognition to attract investment and thus continue its existence, but why did nobody see through it?

The passing of time is the medium through which proclaimed progressive bodies ripen to show off all, and not just some, of their uses. If you wait long enough you observe all liberal-left/progressive groupings and individuals will find an excuse to support some state initiative, this is because their politics exist at the level of ideas, and on the level of ideas, at some point, there is bound to be an alignment between the protest milieu and the state. The collapse of the anti-capitalist movement after September 11, 2001, is proof of this, somehow the Taliban really were more evil than American imperialism and the 'true democracy' of the anarchists felt more sympathetic to the false democracy of the US than the, beyond the pale, theocrats. Apparently it was too difficult to see both the established state and the bandit religion as mutually supportive functions within a capitalist frame, each doing its job and furthering methods and extending techniques of exploitation and accumulation.

The single interest group, which must keep its object in sight even if all else has changed or been abandoned, ends by defending basic essential categories. Categories not much different to those it once opposed; after years fighting against segregation it is later found that *black* people are different to *white* people, have different needs, perspectives, cultures and these must be defended and from *alien* influence. "As we all know, women make the world go round, looking after its entire population; but two thirds of this work is unwaged and undervalued. This lack of economic and social recognition is a fundamental sexist injustice, devaluing women and everything women do, which keeps most of us

That digital technology is primarily about the storage and retrieval of information is a dull but accurate peg, but next year greater magnification will accelerate the book, *The Latin Quarter in the Sixties* and the following year and zooming in still closer, *Le Cafe de Sartre in the Sixties* — mass cultural production is a satellite photograph, it aims to focus on a lit cigarette from a thousand miles up. Information technology is a mining operation, a juicing machine, it is deployed to squeeze out the last drop; recycling is the systemisation of the mudlark and because our moment is comprised of events that recur perpetually, the going over what is already finished is all that is left to entrepreneurs. Wham bam technology is about the retrieval and exploitation of the past, it has nothing to do with either progress or tile future. Under present conditions there is no future. When we see a gaggle of African children gathered about a news reporter and wearing logo emblazoned t-shirts we do not think, *imperialism but anachronism.* This be-calming and stain-spreading out of capitalism, called globalisation, is a bringing into line, a synchronisation of all present factors, it is happening, as all floods happen, because there is nothing else for it to do, there is no way forward, the curse is one of repetition not uncontrolled advance — no social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed). Pop music has declined in value like all reproduced commodities do over time but it does not follow that when it was intense it was an expression of a revolutionary force. There is a natural hierarchy between mouth and ear but in the capitalist economy, the organisation is in place to make sure that when there is speaking then there will be listening, and you can't get more ecological than that.

Capital's maximising of the role of subjective enthusiasm in the production process of pop, and in all similarly maximised products, has actualised a formulaic structuralisation of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is becoming, in the everyday functioning of the multipack individual, a serial array of disconnected, incandescent jolts of pleasure and rapid fallings away — the highs to be had from portable super-technologies are of lesser duration than from the inhaling of crack and this is because gadgets are not products for consumption at all but products waiting for additional labour to finish them, they come to us on a conveyor belt, we do not have long before the next one and like in *Modern Times*, the belt is

of popworld, *Ghost Town*, has become a mere demonstration of what 'authenticity' might look like. Contracts between pop producers and pop broadcasters are to be honoured, targets to be reached, the needs of the one are fulfilled by the other — the lascivious pelvis thrust of pop stars is now a gesture of utter conformity, a cultural adherence. Enthusiasm for pop still exists, and of course that enthusiasm has always been manipulated, but now it must be maintained at a constant frequency, galvanised, provoked, squeezed, machinery is tired.

When quality replaces quantity, that is, when tunes are overshadowed by promotional distractions, when inundation becomes saturation then we'd expect some sort of revolt. If it were simple, then a song sung from the heart would mean something somewhere, it would mean something over and above the interests of the *breadheads*, but what is signed away in public view by the band is clawed back under the table by the accountants. Sadly it seems that the truth of pop has nothing to do with either lyrical good intentions or stylistic heresies; its truth is economic and structural, and was realised in the destruction of autonomous popular culture (pigeon fancying, spam for Sunday tea, model making, wearing hats and dressing like your parents), replacing it with mass culture organised according to the commodity form. Even so, the value of pop music has declined, and it would seem appropriate if, when confronted with the fare of this naked lunch, consumers spat it out and rose up like lions out of slumber and demanded better pop. If the explicit call to pop revolution was *co-opted* by other forces, drugs, failure of vision, cynical record companies, then why not, when confronted with the utter banality of pop's current content, rise up against it? But the fans are not consumers, they have made no decisions — they merely follow, as a vaguely defined workforce, the dictates of economic forces which barely appear in the register of their understanding; the decline in product quality has been accompanied with a similar slippage in the subjective consciousness of the object, which means pop-product can now be *finished* by under-tens (fashionably called *tweenagers*) whilst their parents, just taller children, recondition old material via subjective nostalgia (we saw a display recently in a bookshop consisting of books of photographs entitled *Paris in the Sixties, New York in the Sixties, London in the Sixties*.

poor," (from the leaflet, *mobilise now for the 2nd global women's strike 2001*). So, *Women* are different to *men* and have different characteristics that should be recognised (and included the wage economy), and the first of these differences is that women are caring, nurturing, encouraging to children and to everyone, and men cannot be these things, as they are oppressors. Over time the destruction of classifications, which was the original impulse of single issue groups, becomes the re-institution of classifications but with a new set of waged interpreters, experts and managers, recruited from the 'movement' itself. What was once reviled has now become the goal. In this shielding of their always to be preserved flame these groups fail to observe how capital itself breaks down barriers and stereotypes. They fail to notice objective shifts in the character of labour and thus the infinite social mutations forced on people by the meticulously applied pressures of exploitation: there are now thousands of men staying at home looking after their children because employers prefer, for too many tedious reasons but most obviously because they are cheaper, female workers. In thirty years, capitalist objectivity has turned upside down the critique of feminist essentialism and shown it to be a restrictive and reactionary ideology not willing to engage with the religious idiocy of 'indigenous' cultures where so many women are indeed to be found 'looking after' others — so the intolerant empire of coca-cola capitalism, which must lay waste to native *culture*, is in effect more progressive because it *destroys* tradition, than at least one of the pretenders to its critique.

By the early Seventies, most pro-revolutionary formations were fairly tired, they'd developed in response to Fifty Six and matured during the mid Sixties, by the time of the late Sixties they were getting a bit careworn; they were reduced to looking for 'signs'. It is a convention of that time in pro-revolutionary writing to predict the immanence of revolution, at this distance and not being on personal terms these theorists, it is impossible to say whether they were being optimistic, tactically astute or just desperate. Whatever the motivation, it is plain they lost their puff around Seventy Two, when all hell was breaking loose: guerilla-ism, industrial militancy, liberation politics. It is open to interpretation whether the extreme forms taken at this time were also signs of desperation and a sense of something being lost, the way a child, which had concentrated

in its drawing on minutiae with its tongue peeping out at the comer of its mouth will, when tired, scrawl over its efforts in exasperated and exaggerated gestures.

We can see that pro-revolutionary groups got sucked uncritically into the maelstrom of apparent conflicts and at the moment of intensification we can also see that theory, and therefore all engagement, degraded into mere affirmation of militancy (look at the hideous endorsement of the IRA by many anarchists). We are no scholars of revolutionary theory, what we have read has come to us by chance and so we make no pretence at exhaustive research, but from all the literature relating to this period that we have read we have yet to come across a pro-revolutionary critique of the form engagement took in the hot days of the early Seventies. After so many years in half-empty, smokey rooms, it was no doubt a great pleasure for pro-revolutionaries to step into the sun. If they were the lived theory of the conditions of the world, as they had proclaimed, then it was about time the world supplied them with some objective proof. In short, they had a need to be vindicated, a need to prove the worth of their sacrifices and their faith. Negri viewed the new alleged subject positions, the new causes taken up and out onto the street in the Seventies, as a sign of further social polarisation, the old struggle taking new forms and engaging capital on different fronts. The argument went: if those participating in the wave of actions, demonstrations and movements were not workers as such, the positions defined naturally aligned themselves to the workers' position because of an unconscious awareness, via their personal alienation, of the antagonistic nature of society. It seemed to Negri and his mates that the new social movements would supply to the workers' movement fresh perspective and different tactics, they would widen and deepen the meaning of what it is to be a human being, their protests would illuminate precisely where the repressions of capitalist society chafed most. The composition of the working class would become more diverse, more radical, more politicised, more filled in/complete and more antagonistic to the status quo. The perspectives/experiences of the myriad different movements would break off and become embedded in each other; the many struggles, after initial skirmishes, would discover the interconnectivity of struggle itself; the many struggles would combine to become the one struggle and in victory many yeses would be

milk or else go home.'" There is no more to the avant garde than this. *We've got a secret, you don't know what it is, we turn our backs on you, and you want to see what cute kitty is getting the tickle, and if you payout enough money then you will find out.* 'I liked them before they got famous' is the straggler's refrain because what did he ever possess really? When a new games console comes out, enthusiasts queue up from midnight, to be of that elite, to be *one of the first in the country* to own that particular model, that's really saying something. Our excitement is integral to the production of the object, and our excitement is no more than completing the labyrinth of ownership, programming the video, reading the owner's manual, getting to the end of a computer game. But the measure of time between excitement and indifference is declining. Dylan's shine, his cultishness lasted about five years, the rate of wasting has speeded up since then. In a world of unvaried consistency, the understanding of any detail was sufficient for the understanding of all things, once the smallest detail was properly understood, then everything was understood. Pop music has followed a typical commodity trajectory, an initial specialised product of indefinable but inescapable quality breaks out from its confines and is distributed globally (the peculiar blend of Tennessee hillbilly music with the Blues); a golden age, the perfection of the form and an age of ubiquity, the pop song that genuinely articulated something of lived life; in pop music's case, the *something of lived lived life* was an address to lately abolished popular culture, pop music derived some energy from that association (the *Sgt Pepper* sleeve, nostalgic fairground music, cheeky story songs about obscure 'real' people, Lovely Rita, Arnold Lane, Lola — quickly parodied as Polythene Pam and Telegram Sam).

As the world became saturated, pop had no reference but itself, because there was nothing external to it and no memory of a time when there was. Working class culture ended when pop music forgot to sing about it, and sung about itself instead. Pop had fused with the means of its distribution, it became fully integrated with the media industry, twenty four hour broadcasting delivered twenty four hour pop, at first shovelling it into the airwaves as if into the furnace of a steam engine and then merely programming it, buying it by the yard like old books to be nailed to theme pub shelves. Pop is now designed exclusively for broadcast whilst the last pop record that referred to anything outside

most barriers are down and popular culture has achieved some kind of militaristic uniformity, violinists dress sexy, we all like different songs but essentially it is the same music. Nevertheless, an 'Indian Reservation' is designated within capital's integrated geography for the function of rebellious *expression*.

Capitalism demonstrates its economic mastery of the ideological concept of 'totalitarianism' by encouraging dissent against its existing forms, rebellion is the discovery and integration, as niche markets, of new forms. In capital's actualisation of pop art there are no square pegs, even the squarest are more or less rounded, being fitted into, with a squeeze, the sea of holes and in that juncture making something of a product for someone to gouge at. Bogus subjectivities, call it Puff Daddy, struggle to establish an outsider position by rehearsing scenes of conflict and transgression, mingling them with approximations of regret and thereby holding onto maximum airtime; hiphop recreates fate, 'dat's jus' the way it is,' and it's all Achilles and Hector condemned to a primal scene of rudimentary struggle but really there is no stripping away of the veils, this is not life, this not how it is. What rap has to say is just lad's tales, soldiertalk; the base is not uncovered in pseudo-accounts of pump-action nature. Society's truth, *employment*, is no more to be found *In the Ghetto* than it is in the suburbs.

Capitalism is obscured as much by rebellion as it is in affirmation, the antagonism created out of class interest, that is, the real terms of our social existence, is to be found not more clearly in punk rock than it is at Disneyland. Even rebellious cultural forms work within existing terms, there is no way of assuring that some 'message' might survive commercialisation — not that the revolution is dependent on messages or that we haven't *got* it already; Roger Daltry can sing "meet the new boss same as the old boss", but our repetition of that formula only confirms the impossibility of autonomous consciousness, the very fact that we have heard of Roger Daltry proves we cannot develop revolutionary consciousness, there is no unfenced ground from which it can be generated.

Expressivity, the urge to be traveller not tourist, pioneers the trail, and Dylan mocks, "now, you see this one-eyed midget shouting the word 'now,' and you say, 'for what reason?' And he says 'how,' and you say, 'what does this mean?' and he screams back, 'you're a cow, give me some

chorused in affirmation of the inconceivable numbers of different modes of human being. And this is how present day anti-capitalists see it too, alliances of causes becoming one great cause, many local uprisings, providing the conditions for the existence of each other and throwing out sparks, new revolts extending towards the horizon, filling up the map, and every new revolt at first limiting itself to local concerns and then, thwarted, looking to extend the struggle. The Situationists could write of how the spectacle was producing 'new resistances everywhere', of 'youth rebellion', of 'millions of individual people, each day seeking an authentic life, linking up with the historical movement of the proletariat in struggle against the whole *system* of alienations'. Society appeared to be breaking apart and recomposing itself along explicitly antagonistic lines. Camatte went much further and declared the transfer of revolutionary subjectivity from the working class to a newly becoming *humanity* that would define itself finally against capitalism. And of the array of intellectual sympathisers in French universities eager to affirm what appeared transparent, Castoriadis welcomed new forms of autonomous subjectivity, Deleuze and Guattari saw new forms and potentialities (becomings), and perhaps only Foucault was a bit pessimistic, seeing some affirmative pattern at work but submerged in the liberationist ideologies. There was a general confusion in theoretical and intellectual *contributions* to the revolution over the distinction between the political consciousness of militant minorities and their social-economic determinations; the preference for focusing on political manifestations is understandable but the arena of political consciousness produces only ambiguous facts: yes ten thousand demonstrated one day in a city of five hundred thousand but were each of the ten thousand delegated by fifty others? Or did events present to this ten thousand a critical role to play in that moment and if they did then why didn't they do more? If the social movements were an expression of something bigger, why and how were they separated from this bigger force?

By the 1970's the willful theoretical emphasis on the effects of small group action, which was itself following the logic of progressive radical expressivity, indicates a desire for some form of patriotism in the pro-revolutionaries of the time, particularly as this contemplation of action

obscured the continued non-involvement of the masses. Pro-revolutionaries no longer participated in objective events, they 'made' events and claimed for them the condition of objectivity; the rebel's gesture reflects upon itself and claims it is an expression of underlying reality, this is the radical's variation of *voices in the head*. It could be imagined that the prediction of imminent change and the praising of radical political groups might have been abandoned after the disappointments of the Seventies but anti-capitalist manifestations and the logic of those manifestations are producing the same connections and, crucially, the same non-connections.

It is not that the social movements, the liberation agendas, the personalist politics of the Seventies were defeated (the forward movement of history does not negate what did not become real, it merely ignores it), it is not that these groups failed, that they did not have enough resources or adherents, or the time was not right, all these factors ought to be considered but are not sufficient reason for critique; the social movements draw critique to themselves, from us, because they were wrong. They fell into every trap and cliché imaginable and the worst mistake they made was in imagining that the times they were living through were revolutionary because of what *they* were doing. It is at this point that we re-engage with some of Foucault's pessimistic concepts, we do so only because there is little else from this period that is usable and it is through his concepts that we encounter the second mode of personalism, *expressivity*.

It is not hardship to consider in the space of a few paragraphs a concept outlined by the most intelligent individual of the Twentieth Century. Most popular political movements of the late Twentieth Century operated strategically on an ideological assumption of liberation as their end, however Foucault, in contradiction, argued that society was not based on structures of repression but on techniques of exploitation — he put his finger on economy when so many Marxists were concerned with political side-shows. Where Marxist dialectical theory described radical failure antagonistically, and relied metaphorically on battlefield terms: seizure, capture, recuperation, incorporation, containment; Foucault created the concept of maximisation.

at a level that does not produce the conditions of reality. The machines of expressivity are not the machines of production, they do not produce reality, on the contrary they create more or less true evasions from the nature of reality, this is why the control of such expression is of only a secondary matter. It is why a book, or a song, cannot change the world. Those pro-revolutionaries who site their actions within culture cannot affect the ownership of reality. Here are the shops; these machines, the people, their talk, the clothes, the cars, the food, the architecture, the sounds, appearances, are all working as capital, they are all inclined in one direction, they are the inevitable penny in the charity collection bin that swirls down a funnel and into someone else's pocket — they are all commodities all of the time.

Next section but keep thinking *Expressivity*

The conditions for mass culture were organised during the war, total mobilisation produced in individuals a state of receptivity to readymade cultural forms. When we talk, just like in *The Singing Detective*, we talk in the forms of popular song; we dream, as the Pet Shop Boys observed, of the queen; everybody in the army knew someone who was as funny as Bob Hope; tourism is based on GI's encountering foreigners (Guy Mitchell's *She Wears Red Feathers*), Frank Sinatra on a warship, Fred Astaire cutting a dash through Parisian existentialism.

Expressivity, the speaking, thinking and feeling of readymade forms is determined by the maximisation of the commodity form, all social objects come with a copyright. We cannot *express* anything that is not already in circulation as expression or potential expression, what we add is what the media say advertisers call, *word of mouth*, personal commitment, buying into; the internet is the systematisation of word of mouth. And this is why the concepts of culture and working class consciousness are now moribund. In terms of expression everything is bound, nothing is outside.

At various points popular culture runs up against resistance to it its amphitheatrisation of forms, it is here that it pulls on its radical trousers and rages at incursions of freedom of speech or the restrictive practices of some previously obscure elitism. This happens less now,

getting drunk is work, home computing is work, watching television is work; other people own these machines and we are employed to mind them.

(We are working for the film industry when we go, *and* when we don't go to watch a film. If we do go, the film will be remade under a new title; if we don't then the characteristics of the film will be noted and not used again.) Our gameplaying is training like foxcub rough and tumble on a grassy bank. We do not do nothing, our jabbing at the console, our survey eye at the screen. We are always in preparation for work proper by work irregular.

(The absorption of productive forms via distraction and habit. It is not just school that prepares one for work, 'bizarre quarter — happy quarter — tragic quarter — historical quarter — useful quarter — sinister quarter.' 'What the funfair achieves with its dodgem cars and other similar amusements is nothing but a taste of the drill to which the unskilled labourer is subjected in the factory . . . their behaviour is a reaction to shocks'). Our free-time never broke free of the company shop, we walk around with machines attached to us, the machines are activated in social space, clothes, cars, phones, haircuts, prepacked lunches eaten on foot, damn the old lady and her walking stick in front of me, all are transmitting or creating approximations, reproductions, echoes; the crowd is a production line and each individual speeds up its pace and shaves down its gestures to submit to the force of circumstance.

The point here is not that we should not have feelings for special objects, or that the figure of technology inter-penetrating human existence goes against an ideal natural order — the communist society will also be made by machines set in motion in a human world. Machines, that is objects and states of being, are always present, but in conditions of capital maximisation the technologies operating in social space are not in anyway random or autonomous. Your smile is a machine, I saw it on an advert, my bus ticket is a machine of anxiety, which pocket did I put it in? The thoughts that fire like pin balls down the street ricocheting between our heads, they too are machines, or parts of machines. The problem for pro-revolutionaries is that the machines of expressivity, the sphere of culture, is independent of actual production as such, and although we are always working when we use commodified expression, we are working

Firstly it is important to grasp the form Marxist critique takes so as to understand why that critique became uncritical when confronted by popular politics. The tendency of Marxist theory, as it moves by means of critique, is to disprove everything that itself is not. It assumes an identity between its techniques and the objective movement of history, it has a consciousness of what is real (the real movement of positions and forces within society, which necessarily includes itself) and what is unreal, the vaporous mists that appear important in the present and obscure people's understanding of how society really functions. The theoretical apparatus of the real (Marxism) identifies all that is unreal; the real is riveted to the productive form (albeit as Holmes clasped Moriarty to his breast above the torrential abyss) whilst the unreal drifts about, subject to the hidden determinations of the productive form. The unreal is described and undressed by Marxist theory in degrees of falsity: mists that drift across the actual conditions of life and the interests invested therein: illusion, projection, identification, religion, IDEOLOGY.

We do not reject Marxist critique, but we think it does not go far enough, it does not survey effectively enough its own theoretical grounds, it does not question concepts such as 'the real movement' of antagonism in social forms, and so it is forced, for example, to look for evidence of opposition to capital and identify fragments of this real movement that will one day 'overcome' dominant conditions. A Marxist analysis of ideology, for example, will identify how a small fragment of human experience (goodness, wickedness, will to power, Oedipus) is recognised by enthusiasts of a social project who will take it up to be the explanation of the entirety of human life and thus legitimation of their project (ideological explanations of 'man' usually boil down to formulations such as, 'man is a sexual being,' 'man is fallen,' 'man is a thinking being' etc). Uncritical, theological, explanations of human nature and society are simply engaged by revolutionaries, they are, like the majority of toadstools, neither flavoursome nor noxious, they do neither harm nor good but are merely irrelevant. Most ideologies, whether of football or religion, cannot be used either to defend or attack property as a social relation. Of course it can be said (it is true) that all forms that do not directly express communism to some degree obscure it and thus supply succour to existing society, but there is little 'political' significance in

such observations as we, as individuals, must live now and we all require the opiates of love, art, entertainment, success. The situation alters, and this is where so many pro-revolutionaries fail to apply their critiques when caught up in social eruptions, when an ideology sets itself up as an opposition to existing conditions and thereby attracts the investment of individuals' disaffection to itself. All the time this radical ideology is negating details, *corruption, America, corporations, patriarchy, racism*, it has no critique of the conditions of society and thus, through this mistake, ends affirming by omission *what is really wrong with the world.* What is forgotten by the groups of partial causes is that the world is prepared to negotiate on partial terms. In this way, pro-democracy movements, trade unions, educational and health initiatives, which at first take a critical perspective on the organisation of society end in becoming functions of it. And this is where Marxist terms such as containment and recuperation come in. When circumstance insists that they must contemplate the collapse of apparently revolutionary social movements Marxists come up with a variation on the theoretical model of corruption: they say, the movements in question were once revolutionary but certain factors became dominant over their initial determinants and altered their original nature — this is how the real (movement) recognised and affirmed by theory becomes decayed, ideological and thus not real.

Radicalism fails where it becomes a function of a force bigger than it can conceive and it becomes a function of a larger force because of its theoretical limitations. Radicalism fails because it narrows the margins of the issues it wants to address, it wants to talk about health, or war, or equal pay, but these issues do not stand independently of each other or of the world that contains them. As activists seek to promote the interest of their cause they are at the same time participating in and, by implication, validating processes and forces that they have not consciously addressed; they become part of the great debate, or one interest that must be balanced with the interests of all others: part of the democratic process that must be set before the attention of the electorate. The Marxist concepts of incorporation and recuperation mean very simply that the significance of the values you espouse are outweighed by the values contained, unconsciously but structurally, in your limited objectives. You say, 'defend the health service' but as health service is a function of the

in existence and have to produce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life so they are.

The German Ideology

Next section but keep the concept of Expressivity

There is no difference between the organisation of object *Hear'say* (pop group) and that around the object *Tate Modern* (art gallery). But this enthusiasm is not the alleged phenomena of consumerism (the ufo malaise of *modern life*), enthusiasm is not materialism, commercialisation of Christmas or any other vain spiritual grievance (under the surface over which spirituality hovers, there you shall find money writhing, buried alive). Consumerism doesn't exist, this alleged avarice is a trick, there is nothing objective in the organisation of enthusiasm but the enactment of workcodes — we never possess our objects, Microsoft still owns the software in our computers. Our enthusiasm for the objects of our enthusiasm is workenergy, or a form of pre-work, speculative work, unpaid for finishing, distribution, storage — call it slavery as it is not worth a wage.

If work is the adding of something of ourselves to an object under conditions of force, then our so-called consumerism is, in reality, a version of labour, it is the work of free-time. Our job is to fill out the world, to carry the trigger objects of our enthusiasms to all areas, to produce new objects or the desires for new objects which may already have a commodity character or later require its commodification (the internet is our first example, but every object has its formal and informal enthusiasms, its literatures and its controversies — affects are to be attached, or disengaged or reengaged: in terms of productivity, there is no difference between the programme *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* and my watching it). Our work in the free-time allotted to us is the production of the objects our desires will be stimulated by. Driving your car is work, shopping is work, heading to the out of town is work, working-out is work, sorting your rubbish into different bins is work, flushing the handle is work,

elective communities that arrange themselves about the object of their enthusiasm alter, for themselves, the reality of their condition in two ways: firstly, they do not 'appreciate' their chosen object as it exists objectively, that is, their enthusiasm contains no trace of its derivation — one does not gush for an object as a commodity but carefully screens that element out, even though it is the commodity element that makes the object possible; secondly, fragmented, enthusiast communities arranged about mystified objects are organised according to commodity distribution — what is unacknowledged is that which finally determines. What is present to be appreciated in cultural objects and what determines their character, that is, their distribution, is precisely the mechanism by which exploitation distracts away any appreciation of the forms made possible only by its organisation.

The unconscious, self-organising, character of cultural enthusiasm which proceeds by means of focus on the routines of inclusivity/exclusivity and neglects the great exclusion is like ignoring the rotation of the planets about the sun whilst theorising about the capture of satellites around the Earth. Cultural objects persist because of the audience they have pulled into their sphere of influence, the audience contemplates itself as specially qualified; they see what the rest of society does not see. From the vantage point of the chosen object, or through the screen of consciousness it supplies, the world is always made up of the mostly indifferent or openly incredulous on the outside and *the special few* on the inside. Fans of Manchester United retain their sense of specialness, despite their overabundance, because all other football fans either hate them or are resigned to their existence like dandruff — this can also be said of the fans of Michael Jackson. Otherwise enthusiasts are content with their fewness and with the exquisite finesse by which they may discriminate between almost identical products: antique porcelain, singing groups, crews of Star Trek, Pokemon cards. The cult of Ringo is the epitome of formulaic enthusiasm: too many love John and Paul but I am different I think Ringo is best, he's cutest, at the airport today there were thousands of us chanting "We love Ringo".

> *The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find*

state and was produced by a number of conditioning historical forces and events, you are by implication arguing for the continued existence of the state arrested at a particular point in its history. Recuperation and incorporation are terms that describe the capture of a narrowly specific field of radicality by the capitalist state, not for the purpose of silencing criticism, but so as to deploy the continued existence of that criticism as a demonstration of the state's universality and the impossibility of any real political position outside its bounds. The same fortified position may be taken and used by both sides several times in a conflict. Recuperation means everything that exists affirms what has given existence to everything; every theoretical formulation, every gesture of defiance, every conceivable resistance, every phrase spoken and scrap of thought arcs back to the centre; every phenomenal no is a noumenal yes; all the trees bend in the same direction; the wind blows always against your face and giant beachballs patrol the surf. The concept of recuperation is also a prophecy, revolt is an expression of youth whilst the corruption of *giving in* belongs to age and experience.

Foucault's formulation of maximisation is more subtle than the theological turn in Marxist thought that uncovers, that is driven to uncover, the universal but empty routine by which all flesh decays and no purity may be maintained. It is more subtle and more true because it has more content. It is not enough to denounce in a religious manner; our need, as pro-revolutionaries, is always for more accurate instruments, more effective weapons.

> *It seems in fact that what was involved was not asceticism, in any case not a renunciation of pleasure or a disqualification of the flesh, but on the contrary an intensification of the body, a problematization of health and its operational terms: it was a question of techniques for maximising life.*
>
> History of Sexuality

What has been instituted since the beginning of capitalist exploitation is a tightening of the screw, a winding in of the rope the perpetual drive to cut the cost of production. Capitalist exploitation of circumstance, and of flesh, expands suddenly at first and then gradually. First there is

globalisation, imperialism, the ravening hoard, the advancing plague and when every surface is occupied then comes the widening and deepening of the capitalist form. What Marxists have described in political-military similes as recuperation, this averting of their gaze and still being turned into stone, is really the continued intensification of economic processes of exploitation; as Foucault says, of maximisation. This is a matter of advancing productive techniques not the capture of subject positions; after achieving for capital mere geographical ubiquity now boss-science must shove aside the old mole to strip mine and hollow out existence at the level of the infinitesimal, it transforms autonomous life-processes into factories. Mice, trees, viruses are now to be used to grow injection-moulded commodities. And it is precisely at this moment that pro-revolutionary and Marxist critique formulated both the subjectivity of 'many struggles', and conceptualised the flanking manoeuvres by which state-capital would capture these positions, leaving to the pro-revolutionaries irrelevant positions in the political sphere where they must defend tunnelled out and undermined territories by means of resistance. From the Seventies to the present pro-revolutionaries have done little more than occupy defensive and reactionary positions, resisting the encroachment of forces that they had already theorised must win, the theory of recuperation has always been recuperated. It achieved a condition of peace, 'ok lads, struggle at first in hope but go limp when you feel the grip tightening'. Recuperation, the theory of defeat, the theory of 'upsurges' and 'downturns' in struggle inevitability facilitated the withdrawal of thousands of militants from the struggle in apparent good faith.

But they were wrong, what was going on, the apparent radical rise and legalised decline of personalist politics was nothing to do with a wide ranging political and military engagement of social movements with capital. From the start these radicalities had a commodified aspect; there was no rise and decline at all, no loss of revolutionary potential, no falling away of impetus or direction even if there was a spectacular trajectory of sorts. Personalist politics never articulated the manoeuvre of recuperation, which in itself was an ideology of resignation and an embrace of political/academic mystification; this process was never a case of subjectivities and their capture, but of the furtherance of a specific mode of production. From the beginning personalist liberation strategies

but a technique, its significance remains). It had its modalities, Trad Jazz, The Folk Revival, Aldermaston, fanclubs, cigarette cards, rock and roll, protests. You were certain that, no matter what the chosen object of your enthusiasm, you could find others who shared your appreciation. Capitalist society, at the level of individual experience means simply this: whilst you no doubt experience yourself as a separate entity you find you are never alone; the book you want from the library has been taken out, there was no occasion when you had the swimming pool or the cinema to yourself, the road is full of traffic, there is a queue at the checkout — you go to the latenight garage to buy a pot noodle, it is three o'clock in the morning but there are five others already there, they look exactly like you and are buying the same thing. You think you experience everyone else as the crowd, as something separate from you but forever surrounding you, obstructing you, blocking your view and shoving from behind. It is difficult to think, 'I am an atom'. The decisions you make are repeated a thousand times in other, remote, lives as the sun is shared in each grain of a broken windscreen, spilled out in the gutter. Receiver not transmitter: if you become separated from the crowd, *there's a club if you'd like to go*, you can meet people just like you, there are clothes to be worn, equipment to be accrued; it is just like Bruce Lee, just where you are thwarted there you shall flower. One of the characteristics of expressivity, as a social quality as well as a brand of politics, is the sensed dispersal of ordinary social commonality as it is determined objectively by economic forces. Other, more immediate, more personal motors are presumed to be the cause of behavioural reality (psychology). When ordinary reality is dispersed in consciousness it is replaced by a subsequent, compensatory, centripetal drive revolving on a hub of arbitrary but strict 'cultures'. Strangers come together.

Expressivity has its social and economic determinates, what was previously permitted like a bit of wasteground in the City, as irrelevant and vulgar entertainment of the masses, 'working class culture' if you insist (if that is not a self-contradiction) was abolished after 1950 and replaced with mass popular culture developed according to the commodity form. Which means only that in every city of the world you will find a McDonalds and in every city you will find an anti-capitalist protester — the object shaped by the commodity form is that which recurs. The

pit your head like meteorites. You weigh them up, you can't make them out exactly but find yourself muttering them like pre-prayer material; or you make like you aren't even interested — you toss them into a corner, and then you pick them up again without even noticing. You can't get rid of this thing humming in your brain. You have an attachment you didn't know about so you need to dispose of it, you work it out to its end, achieve *closure* by following a special procedure, like that of *the poverty of philosophy*. Or maybe just find something else palm-sized as a replacement. *Bowling green. Sewing machine*, is the couplet snarled by the *defiant ones* at bay, it is tossed like a flickflacking acrobat at the cop who has cornered them. He doesn't get it, and it just begins to show on his face. The film ends. *Bowling green, sewing machine*, as a phrase isn't pretty or profound but it is hammered enough times through the film for it to stay put. Is this some kind of victory?

Nonsense verse becomes fantastical because of the arbitrary connections effected by mechanical rhymes as they pile up in succession like tumblers on a vaulting horse; it is the kind of procedure used by Surrealists and occasional blues singers, Willie '61' Blackwell is the only one we can name, Beefheart is the arty version. *Sewing machine* is also suggestive of Lautréamont, it is a modern object, and to make poetry about modern objects is to live slap bang in the modern world (it is said that the sides of this world are smooth, the pace of this life is fast, machines 'turn and people lose their arms. You expect a favour? You won't get a favour. You get off the bus and nobody applauds. Swim in the stream bud. No nostalgia just immersal, and always the cutting to it; shoot straight and if you can't shoot straight shoot fast, no time for long speeches, *just do it*, checklist tick). *Bowling green, sewing machine*, it's an expression of how things stand; in saying it the defiant one says, 'I can see exactly what is going on here'. And the implication is the cop doesn't see it at all. There is some power in incantations if they reach into something that is not ordinarily visible, that is not visible to those who live out ordinary functions. The ordinary steps back when confronted by the extraordinary, feeling like something furious is dragging it off the map.

Expressivity began after the War. It had its avant garde: Beat poetry, Be-Bop, Pop Art, Abstract Expressionism, Existentialism. It had its media: recorded music, film, sound amplification (and if this is not a medium

aimed at the establishment of bureaucratic and cultish elites which, when fully ripe, could be swallowed whole by general administrative structures of the state and the economy, that and the development of differentiated markets: the black dollar, separatist economies, the pink pound, the gay village, the women's vote; black/gay/women's studies — all of these 'recuperated' and essentially conservative and exploitative enterprises were present in the aspirations of the liberation movements at their beginning in the way that a capitalist exploitation was not. Of course at an individual level, the reforms devised and pushed through may have made life easier for some people, a passionate debate about rights with a university chancellor is preferable to being chased by a bigoted mob. But that is not our point.

It is no doubt preferable to exist in a freer climate than an oppressive one, to exist under a democratic state than a fascist one, but this is saying nothing of value, to live in a condition of lessened exploitation is not the end of revolutionary aspiration and it is demonstrably not the means either. We have understood since the anti-fascist political mystifications of the Thirties that the basic social relation within all states (including its pseudo-opposition) is the same and the political condition within each state mutually conditions the others — it is not a matter of supporting this democratic nation against that fascistic one but of viewing all nations together as an array of possible political methods of domination under a given set of economic conditions. This nation's democracy cannot be exported so as to replace that nation's totalitarianism; this nation's democracy is as much a strategy as the other's fascism, a strategy decided upon and implemented by the same class in the same moment, just as a particular company might count razor wire and sticking plasters amongst its products. In history all individual states *become* more or less authoritarian and more or less open as events dictate, they tend to swap masks between themselves. The liberal state utilises the spectre of totalitarianism to defend its own iniquities: there is the ongoing threat of dangerous and unwished for transformation, of losing 'what we have got,' and of the rescinding of reforms by pressure of 'objective' circumstance, of the democratic state becoming totalitarian, of the reforms recently won being reversed (thus under the constant threat of the so-called *police state* pro-revolutionaries are forced to defend what now exists as 'civil

liberties' rather than fighting for something else entirely). This element of falsity in pro-revolutionary thought is a product of the fatal confusion of political expediencies with economic actuality, a confusion brought on by the gradual erasure of the experience of work (and therefore mislaying the true character of exploitation) and its subsequent replacement by academic research.

Subjective liberation projects were, from their inception, examples of productive maximisation; at the heart of the liberationist project, machines of manufacture were set in motion and markets established to consume the commodities flowing out. Out of anecdotal grievances, short hand concepts of oppression, and the response to real prejudice, opportunities were exploited for the furtherance of the capitalist social relation. Through a transference of the 'revolutionary project' to the apparatus of political appearance, the causes of personally experienced misery could be mis-attributed to simple mechanisms of caricatured oppositions of interest: the situation of women could be attributed to men, blacks to whites, gays to straights. And all the time, profit was to be made through the enforcement of prejudice, and in the case of Apartheid profit was to be made through its reduction and overthrow (and all instances of political rejection of prejudice refers back to apartheid as an essence made concrete). Anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-prejudice capitalism is an explicit project of the United Nations. It is apparent therefore that prejudice is not the true problem and its overcoming is no kind of solution to the exploitation of humanity. This literal overcoming of prejudice is a fantasy anyway, it disappears like a vanishing point on a *trompe l'oiel* horizon — prejudice is effect not cause, it is present in all of our partial experience and in the very structure of language. The liberation effected by oppressed subjectivities that we have experienced since the Sixties can in no way be considered to constitute social progress, unless, that is, we acknowledge progress to be something malign. Progress implies development within set conditions and the set conditions of our society are those that constitute capitalism. Progress, in present society, is a concept applicable only to the increasing effectiveness of exploitative procedures.

Has it all been in vain? Was the struggle of the Seventies worthless? If we consider our world and ask ourselves whether our lives have in

general then the answer must be that, in general, they have not. The end of the liberation struggles was the achievement of a status of normality, that and a commodity definition for what had been previously undefined economically. To live a normal life, for those previously excluded, like any other poor dummy, is some kind of something, we suppose. Life for some has got better, that which chafed has been filed down. But there is no balance book, no means by which partial advancements may offset other defeats, no way even of knowing what precisely is a defeat and what is, precisely, a victory. The question is quite different and sets itself up as: has personalist politics contributed to the social revolution? The answer is plainly that it is has not, other than in a negative sense, that is, it has shown us how easy it is to go wrong, but should we exhaust all available roads before finally turning for our destination? It may be the case, and we are sure it is, that some people had some great experiences during the high days of the personalist struggles, it may be that a lot of people feel that they have achieved something remarkable, that they have been lifted up from one moment by some wave of elemental social force and set down again in a completely other moment; from the Forties to the Eighties is as far from Kansas to Oz, from monochrome to colour. They led a life vibrant and tight-packed with experience, we are sure that this is true, it is as true as the disillusionment of other individuals and as true as the structural modification of this force which began as popular protest and ended as equal opportunities law, all of this is true, but it is not the point.

Something is happening here but you don't know what it is, do you Monsieur Dupont?

So far we have considered *the inescapable condition* now we turn our attention to cost effective individuality, we call it *expressivity*

Bowling green. Sewing machine.

You know, some of the pieces get to you, they are broken off from somewhere else, against the odds they survive atmospheric burn-up and